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INFO RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHINGTON DC
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 000068

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR OES/S NANCY CARTER-FOSTER, EUR/CE ASCHEIBE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [UNDP](#) [UNGA](#) [EU](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA: DISTRACTED DRIVING DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 6703

Sensitive But Unclassified; not for Internet Distribution.

11. (U) Post delivered reftel demarche to the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, under the Ministry of Administration and Interior, which is responsible for traffic safety and enforcement. The General Inspectorate has provided post a written response dated January 29 to reftel points and questions.

12. (U) According to the General Inspectorate, a Government Ordinance (which has the force of law) issued in 2002 outlaws cell phone usage, except with hands-free devices, while driving in Romania. This is interpreted to mean use of cell phones both for talking and for texting. Violators incur fines as well as penalty points on their driving records. In 2009, the police recorded 63,782 infractions of this ordinance. Although the police do not have detailed data on the number of injuries and fatalities specifically associated with distracted driving, they estimate that mobile phone usage or texting while driving contributed to approximately five percent of the almost 10,000 motor vehicle accidents nationwide in 2009.

13. (U) During the last quarter of 2009, the Traffic Police Directorate within the General Inspectorate of Police, in cooperation with partners from civil society and the media, started a national campaign called "Take Life in Your Own Hands." The public awareness campaign focused on educating Romanian drivers about "hands free" devices and involved the distribution of more than 200,000 flyers and posters with prevention messages.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: As is often the case in Romania, the problem lies not with laws and regulations but with their implementation. Enforcement of traffic laws is inconsistent. Do likely that "distracted pedestrians" contribute to this problem, as cell phone use by pedestrians is ubiquitous and police statistics show that auto-pedestrian accidents are the number one source of traffic fatalities in Romania. The prevalence of distracted driving, and of accidents associated with it, is likely higher than reported. END COMMENT.

GITENSTEIN